

NIFC News

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National Interagency Fire Center Provides Response Teams, Crews to Assist FEMA in Hurricane Efforts

Boise – The National Interagency Fire Center is joining in the massive response effort in the wake of this week's Hurricane Katrina. As of today, more than 1,000 people, representing Department of the Interior agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters, have been mobilized to support the relief effort.

“Although wildland fire is our primary focus, we are organized to respond to all types of emergencies and we have the expertise needed to manage large, complex incidents,” said Phil Street, fire director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and spokesman for the National Multi-Agency Coordinating group.

Incident Management Teams, hand crews, logistics specialists, and other support personnel are responding to assist FEMA at sites from Georgia to Florida, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi.

“We are participating at all levels of the incident response,” Street said. “We have crews there with skilled sawyers to help remove damaged and fallen trees, along with management and logistics teams to manage staging areas for distributing supplies, and more. We also have planning teams in place that are assisting with long-term recovery planning.”

(more)

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Noting that everyone's heart goes out to those people affected by the tragic losses inflicted by the hurricane, Street also said the personnel mobilized through NIFC have a tremendous service ethic and commitment to the public and public safety.

While NIFC will continue to support requests for assistance, fire season continues in the West and efforts will be made to maximize hurricane aid while maintaining the ability to protect lives and property from wildfire.

“We will do all we can to assist in the hurricane response effort while at the same time fulfilling our fire responsibilities throughout the West,” Street said.

With the number of resources going to support the hurricane response, the federal fire community will up its preparedness planning level from 3 to 4 Thursday morning. This more heightened state of preparedness recognizes that requests for wildland fire resources for hurricane relief support have the potential to be significant and long term.

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